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ABSTRACT

A study was done to investigate the coupling of perceptions of organizational climate together with the values of students in a multiethnic middle school. The study used data on cultural variables and information on perceptions of organizational climate and values priorities of 617 students from different ethnic groups (Black, White, Hispanic, Oriental, and other) responding to 2 questionnaires, the Elementary and Secondary Environment Index and the Rokeach Values Survey. A discriminant analysis was used to determine how these aspects functioned together in the minds of students from each ethnic group. Discriminant analysis was used to predict group membership based on certain response patterns. These patterns were successful in predicting ethnic group membership 61.4 percent of the time. Findings indicate that students have very different perceptions of middle schools to the extent that they seem to be having different experiences entirely. In particular, Hispanic students look forward to the future as independent adults, but White and Oriental students do not; Black students are not as crisis oriented as are Hispanic students; Oriental students are much less spontaneous than are White students; and White students are much less practical than are Oriental students. Contains 24 references. (JB)

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A STUDY OF MULTICULTURAL APPROACHES TO SCHOOL: FUNCTIONAL DIFFERENTIATIONS AMONG ETHNIC STUDENTS IN FIVE MULTIETHNIC MIDDLE SCHOOLS

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Introduction:

This paper is an extension and development of a study intended to investigate whether there were any differences among ethnic group perceptions of organizational climate within multiethnic middle schools and the values of these student groups. The present study investigates these data combined together as ethnic perceptions of climate and values of ethnic groups. Combined together the values of students and group perceptions of climate indicate the basis for behavior within schools. Further, the present study investigates recommendations for possible directions in dealing with difficulties and potential conflicts through some recommendations for curriculum.

The present investigation delves into the coupling of perceptions of organizational climate together with the values of the students. Using discriminant analysis, the perceptions of organizational climate and student values coinciding with the ethnic groupings of students. The research question dealt with those items which were critical predictors of ethnic differences; i.e., those differences underlying the motivations of behaviors of students with ethnic differences. The findings include four functional differences underlying behavior among ethnic students in multiethnic middle schools.

Review of the Literature

The following three sections of review of literature have the purpose of developing the concept of ethnic culture in interaction within school environments as they create the environmental culture of the school. These three sections deal with culture, organizational climate and how culture and climate come together to influence behavior in schools.

Cultural Differences in Schooling

Language and culture determine our perception of events around us. Built up upon this groups develop rules for behavior and conduct. Human beings are dependant upon the sensitivity of language and culture which are instruments of processing behavior for their subgroup. The concrete universe is spontaneously built up on the cultural habits of the group because customs of a group compel definite choices for interpretation. (Sapir, pp. 75-93)

> And every language is a vast pattern-system, different from others, in which are culturally ordained the forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but also analyzes nature, notices or neglects types of relationship and phenomena, channels his reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness. (p. 252).

> Language and culture execute this synthetic chopping up of the continuous spread and flow of existence in a distinctive manner. Language and culture is sensitive to the influence of demographic metamorphosis. (Levi Strauss, pp. 14, 21, 66-67, 116-17).

Underlying the student's experiences in school, all behavior and all perceptions are tangled up together with ethnic, linguistic and cultural experiences. Experiences with a group of peers from a particular neighborhood, who may attend the same school, are influential factors in what students experience: how they perceive events around them; the fashion in which they experience it and the style with which they react to situations.

Notice should be given the diverse experiences students may have in school. Students are members of the organizational bureaucracy, as are teachers and

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life in middle schools: Independence Goals, Adolescent Crisis and Adjustment, Spontaneity, and Practical Survival Behavior. in which the subject prioritizes 36 values with labels.

The Elementary and Secondary Environment Index contains 61 true-false questions about their school. In asking students to react to questions about the organizational climate of their school, the children may react in terms of their personal understanding and involvement in school. Part of what they are reacting to is a somewhat different set of experiences than other children. Part of what they are reacting to is another way of seeing the school experiences; along with a diverse interpretation and a distinct frame of reference.

In responding true, or false to the climate questions, one of the questions asks, Many student desks or locker are messy, some even dirty. This is a fairly concrete question about something that can be seen on any given day. Yet, students from fairly meticulous homes would perceive these lockers as dirty, and children from untidy homes would perceive them as clean. Extending this concept to other questions would cause us to see that the students react within a cultural frame of reference. This frame of reference causes them to perceive common school events in accordance with group background and experience, causing perceived experiences to cluster together at varying levels of importance.

Findings included in this study include four discriminant functions differentiating how children value and perceive their school environments. The findings, described in more specific detail later on, include the following four functions of environmental approaches taken by children from differing ethnic groupings.

Cultural Function 1, Independence Goals, includes a combination of early adolescent behavior that we both love and hate. This function includes the dynamic motivation for behavior where adolescents declare their independence from significant adults and aspire to life as an adult. Those loading on this function are interested in the arts, learning, neatness, courage, and accomplishments. They are not interested in obedience, routine activities, cleanliness or honesty. White students load negatively on this function. Hispanic students load positively on this function.

Cultural Function 2, Adolescent Crisis and Adjustment, points toward the adaptation adolescents go through as they adjust to physiological and social changes inherent in adolescence. Those loading on this function are interested in opposite sex friendships, literature, wisdom, serious discussions. They are not concerned about reputation or having the right friendships. These students feel that the teachers care, but that they treat you like immature people. Hispanics load positively on this function. Blacks load negatively.

Cultural Function 3, Spontaneity, indicates a perception of school where instructional activities are unplanned and unexciting; there is little interest here in science and teachers are relatively unenthused and unambitious. There is some interest in social problems, but school is seen as boring. Both Orientals and Multiethnic students load quite negatively on this function, while Hispanics indicate some interest in it. This means that Hispanics like spontaneity the most and Orientals dislike it.

Cultural Function 4, Practical Survival Behavior, keynotes and emphasis on being independent in the present time, an emphasis on essentials of life directed toward the immediate difficulties of adolescence. Students emphasizing this function have no time for neatness, opposite sex friendship, social issues, serious discussions, school loyalty or health concerns. But they do emphasize Independence, Self-Reliance, Cliques, Peace, Mature Love, Logical Thinking, and conforming to norms. Oriental students loaded positively on this function, Multiethnic students loaded negatively. Blacks were mildly interested in this cultural function.

Table 1:
Canonical Discriminant Functions
Evaluated at Group Means

Group	Functn1	Functn2	Functn3	Functn4
Black	0.331	-0.800	0.149	0.104
White	-1.019	0.152	0.093	-0.068
Hispnc	0.690	0.676	0.241	0.090
Oriental	-0.127	0.220	-2.266	1.673
Other*	0.520	-0.009	-1.210	-1.331
Eigenvl	0.521	0.336	0.272	0.203
Var	39.12	25.12	20.38	15.26
Corrltn	0.585	0.503	0.46	0.411

* Too few cases to be non-singular.

Findings included on table 2 represent to us the accuracy each function has for predicting group membership. This is to say, given similar profiles for similar school behaviors there is accordingly a strong possibility of group membership to these behaviors.

Table 2: Classification Results

	Predicted Group Membership:				
Group	Black	White	Hispanic	Oriental	Other
Black	53.7%	17.6%	18.1%	3.2%	7.4%
White	11.7%	63.3%	12.2%	5.1%	7.7%
Hspnc	12.7%	9.2%	64.2%	3.5%	10.4%
Oriental	0.0	11.1%	5.6%	77.8%	5.6%
Other	10.3%	5.1%	10.3%	5.1%	69.2%
Number	188	196	173	18	39

Percent of Grouped Cases Correctly Classified: 61.40%

and interpersonal. People may contemplate, analyze and plan in solitude, but behavior and interpersonal learning take place in encounters with other persons. Social controls demand a limited range of behaviors from the individual. The person's own needs, such as the need for acceptance from others, provides the condition under which the individual conforms to external demands. The individual will respond only to those external forces which he is perceiving and experiencing at the time. The person's internal condition may cause him to repress various environmental stimuli (Moment and Zaleznick, 1963, p. 5).

These underlying psychological controls are needs that are often determined by cultural membership. The main theme of adolescence is group identity. Adolescents must come to terms with new bodies and new potentialities for thinking and feeling. Adolescents must rearrange the image of self in accordance with a new body, a body that is maturing earlier or later than age group peers, and a new surge for independence. Group membership involves belongingness and exclusion. Acceptance and rejection point to the despotic nature of social relationships. Inclusion or exclusion may be on personal or ethnic grounds (Stone and Church, p. 383-4, 437).

Among adolescents, group identity takes on momentous proportions as they seek to affiliate themselves in social relationships outside the home. (Gay, pp. 653-5). Given the opportunity to do so people ...gravitate toward places with others who share the same personal idiosyncrasies and there behave typically in ways that are consistent with the specific setting in which they have come together (Stern, 1970, p. 1). Group identity begins with ready-made endowments shared with others according to birth, language, religion, family, custom and identifiable cultural symbols. These identifiable symbols are attached to prior experiences that make the person feel comfortable with others that are trusted and with whom one feels a bond of commonality. (Glazer and Moynihan, pp. 31-33).

Students cluster together within informal groupings in schools according to various ethnic and cultural arrangements, and approach school work with reference to other members of social groups with which they identify.

> "...children from a given family background, when put in schools of different social composition, will achieve at different levels. This effect is less for white pupils than for any other minority group, without much educational strength when put with classmates with strong educational backgrounds...." (Coleman, p. 22).

The difficulty is not with the subjective aspects of behavioral observation, but in the complexity of interaction forms. Leading a school for younger adolescents becomes a momentous responsibility when one realizes that there are noteworthy dissimilarities in perceptions underlying behaviors determining everyday school events among various groups of students. The schools studied tend to have a few serious difficulties; none of these schools seemed to have any after school activities and there seemed to be an apparent degree of disorganization in all of them (Stern, 1970).

Procedures

Consideration of cultural variables included 97 items of information on perceptions of organizational climate and value priorities of the 617 students responding. In the present study these data are included all together in an investigation of how these variables are interactive in the lives of urban students in multiethnic schools.

In a previous study (Sewell, 1988) it was shown that students from different ethnic backgrounds had significantly different perceptions of the same school environments and that these differences were perceived according to completely different factor structures.

Included in the present analysis, discriminant analysis was used to determine how these aspects functioned together in the minds of students from each ethnic group. It seemed that the students from each group had their own logical system for responding to the questionnaires in the way that they did; Discriminant analysis was used to predict group membership based on certain response patterns. In this analysis these patterns were successful in predicting ethnic group membership 61.4% of the time. The 97 items were included on two questionnaires: the Elementary and Secondary Environment Index and the Rokeach Values Survey. Ethnic identity was indicated by the students themselves, who identified their ethnic identity on a cover sheet.

Findings

The findings for this study are included in figure 1, and tables 1 through 3. The first two tables are included with the text, immediately following. The third table is a summary of the contents of the four functions and is included as an appendix at the end of this paper.

The first table summarizes the four cultural functions identified and the loadings of the ethnic groups on each of these functions. The numbers included on table 1 are best described as z-scores. Positive and negative scores indicating standard deviations from the mean. For example, the loading of -2.20 for Orientals on Function 3, indicates an extreme difference from the mean for this function. Other scores indicated are much closer to the mean for all groups on each function, but relative differences in emphasis of those structures underlying behavior in school.

The findings include four cultural functions indicating differences in approaches to early adolescent

school administrators. They contribute toward the personality of the school's culture, even though they contribute differently to the school culture, they belong there based upon their right to schooling.

In a very recently published seven year longitudinal study Grant and Sleeter (1988) found that ethnic differences in the school experience are more socially-determined: i.e., that the school context perpetuates social relationships stratified by race, social class and gender. Grant and Sleeter found that lower class ethnic students, assume subordinate roles in school.

Organizational Climate Construct

In 1936 Kurt Lewin developed Field Theory: Every scientific psychology must take into account whole situations, i.e., the state of both the person and the environment. p. 3-4). In 1938 Field Theory was developed by H.A. Murray in his development of a taxonomy of personalities. In his writing he said: ...a statistical answer leaves unexplained the uncommon (exhibited-by-the majority) response....Averages obliterate the individual characters of individual organisms..., and so fail to reveal the complex interaction of forces which determine each concrete event. (Murray, pp. ix-x).

Based upon these theoretical foundations George Stern (1970) developed the organizational climate construct stating the formula: [B=f(NxP)]. That is to say, Behavior is a function of personality "Needs" and environmental "Press."

Organizational climate is defined as the organizational counterpart of personality. In a manner of speaking, organizations personalities too. If we walk into a school building we immediately have a feeling about the place as a happy place, or a serious place; a place where children do a lot of art work; where there are nurturing relationships among teachers and children. Whatever we might say about individual personalities, we can say much the same thing about schools. (Halpin, 1967, pp. 131-2; Stern, 1970, p. 5).

In this study 617 middle school students responded to the Elementary and Secondary Environment Index, companion to the Organizational Climate Index developed by George Stern (1970). They also responded to the Rokeach Values Survey, in which the subject prioritizes 36 values with labels.

Cultural characteristics among an ethnic group include behavioral standards, customs, beliefs, interpersonal practices, etiquette, sanctions and disciplinary practices, acquired habits, and ways of thinking and doing things. These are socially learned and transmitted aspects of social interaction; systems of interrelated and interdependent patterns of response among a distinctive community of people. Given that teachers must communicate and motivate; administrators must deal with disciplinary problems and issues; and cooperating citizens must come together to agree on common goals; what about a school where everyone perceives things in various systems of thought?

Students do have legal standing in the school and an enforced legal contract as the clients of the school; they do engage in the exchange process among organizational members, contribute toward the fundamental work of the school, these students have certain rights to space and time. These aspects of student participation in the power background of the school would indicate that students should be included in the definition of organizational participation, but may be treated differently in the exchange process that occurs in the interaction of teachers and students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds

Jones has suggested a proposition for viewing organizational complicity by various levels of group members in the productivity of an organization. Jones suggests that culture acts as a cognitive map that influences the way in which the context is defined, for it provides the selection of norms and values through which people enact events.... shared knowledge of social structure, ...consists instead and entirely in the enforceable character of actions in compliance with the expectancies of everyday life as a morality. (p. 454).

Obviously, the conditions under which students participate in the school as an organization are very different from the conditions under which the teachers participate. Indeed, some groups of students will feel less affinity for the school culture and will involve themselves differently: with different feelings of ownership and conditions for participation. For example, a black student in a school with all white teachers may express other attitudes about school than if the school had some black teachers. Similarly, the student will feel differently about school participation if the student is a member of a large identifiable group, then if he or she is a member of a small minority group within the school. Group identity is apart of the life of an adolescent, more than for adults. The size of the group, the self-concept of the group members affects the degree of participation and the quality of interaction with members of other groups.

Cultural Conceptualizations of School Environments

Perception and experience are closely connected together. New events are defined in terms of what is previously known. Information is withdrawn from the stimulation of the moment and interpreted and categorized in terms of past experiences. Individuals tend to perceive experiences in the way they expect to perceive them and fit them together with previously known sets of information. Events are perceived and understood in terms of previously known cultural symbols, values, norms, terms and roles (Hollander, p. 127-131).

The basis of social events occurs within the boundaries of the experienced situation, which is social

The findings included on table 3, appendix, outline the information included on each cultural function. The degree to which items correlate with the cultural function identified, and the degree to which the item loads on the function. The following four columns to the right include mean differences for each of the groups identified. These numbers are mean raw scores, such that organizational climate information ranges from 0.0 to 1.0 and values range from 1.0 to 18.0. For those who may be interested in more detailed introspection, study of this table will indicate ethnic differences. Included in these data are items which load to a slight extent, but more generally; and items which load more severely, but to a smaller extent, etc.

Recommendations for Curriculum Development

Given that students have very different perceptions of middle school, indeed they seem to be having different experiences entirely, what can be done about it? Generally the schools visited for the purpose of this study were in a state of near pandemonium. Cultural stress was evident everywhere the researcher went. This would appear to be very consistent with the findings.

Given that Hispanic students look forward to the future as independent adults, but white and oriental students do not; that Black students are not nearly as crisis oriented as Hispanic students; that Oriental students are much less spontaneous than White students and that Oriental students are much more practical than White students, it must be accepted as an essential problem that the motivational characteristics of these students is essentially different.

How can teachers motivate their students under these circumstances? How can school administrators build school spirit and school-wide cohesiveness when the essential motivational characteristics of various groups is different?

Conclusions

Given that adolescents still do have a great deal in common, it becomes the raw material of a solution to begin with the maturational surges that all adolescents must deal with. The curriculum needs to be adapted so that those commonly held issues of physical maturation are the motivation and those differences which divide the students become the basis for curriculum. Implied in this is a very profound change for urban schools. Survival issues in adolescence are the essential motivators. Learning basic skills is only a bi-product of the social and emotional interchange which occurs in school.

The first priority for curriculum in schools for adolescents must be the student in the next desk, issues of immediate social and emotional importance. It is through this type of curriculum that students can be approached and motivated. Given that the blood, sweat and tears of adolescence is the substance of the curriculum, then the issue of how we will delve into reading, writing and mathematics will flow more successfully because students are motivated.

They will need to know more or less what it is they must adapt to, but the process will be different for students from different backgrounds. The job of the teacher is to help students adapt to changing requirements in a complex society: to set up a basis for and understanding of general differences among students from various cultural groups..

To be fully competent with one's peers predictably indicates the possibility of becoming literate with the larger world. To overcome the complexities of life in a multiethnic community may prepare our children to be more fully competent than those who are not experienced and competent to communicate with those who are different from themselves.

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APPENDIX

Table 3:

Components of Ethnic Discriminant Functions (n= 617)

Cultural Function 1: Independence Goals

Item#	Item:	Correlatn	Coeff
OC1	Intested in Arts	0.27	0.47
OC21	Seldom Read	-0.26	0.47
OC48	Manners Impt	0.26	0.21
Val 17	Friends	0.24	0.63
OC47	Sch Safety Impt	0.22	0.38
OC31	Not Int in Arts	-0.21	-0.12
OC53	Lrning Motvtn	0.21	0.16
OC54	Lrning Motvtn	0.19	0.23
Val33	Obedient	-0.19	-0.49
OC20	Busy Activities	0.18	-0.15
OC22	Neatness	0.18	0.26
OC17	Tchrs baby you	0.18	0.17
Val24	Courage	0.18	0.38
Val23	Cleanliness	-0.17	-0.45
Val3	Accomplishmts	0.17	0.58
OC32	Friendly Students	0.16	0.56
Val27	Honest	-0.15	-0.76

Cultural Function 2: Adolescent Crisis & Adjustment

Item#	Item:	Correlatn	Coeff
OC61	Opposite Sex	0.23	0.72
OC13	Int in Lit	0.20	0.55
OC24	Opposite Sex	0.19	0.58
Val18	Wisdom	0.18	0.51
OC16	Serious Subjs	0.18	0.34
OC11	Reputatn Impt.	0.16	-0.39
OC17	Tchrs baby you	0.16	0.45
OC3	Tchrs Care	0.14	0.36
OC30	Smoking/Drugs	0.14	0.18
OC2	Right Friends	-0.14	-0.46

Cultural Function 3: Spontaneity

Item#	Item:	Correlatn	Coeff
OC35	Plnned Activts	-0.23	-0.65
Val2	Exciting	-0.23	-0.66
OC15	Inst Science	-0.21	-0.73
OC33	Fun in School	0.19	0.80
OC49	Tchrs Distrust	0.16	0.33
OC27	Go Along	0.15	0.75
Val5	Beauty	0.14	0.59
OC37	Tchrs Enthused	-0.14	-0.16
Val19	Ambitious	0.11	-0.40

Cultural Function 4: Practical/Survival Behavior

Item#	Item:	Correlatn	Coeff
Val29	Independence	0.27	0.53
OC40	Neat in school	-0.21	-0.49
Val15	Self Respect	0.20	0.70
OC43	Opposite Sex	-0.18	-0.82
OC58	Not int in Soc Probs	0.18	0.43
OC52	Unkind Jokes	0.16	0.81
OC9	School Events	-0.16	-0.39
OC51	Serious Discussn	-0.16	-0.39
OC4	School Loyalty	-0.14	-0.40
OC19	Cliques/Groups	0.14	0.56
Val4	Peace	0.13	0.31
OC50	Neat School	-0.12	-0.14
Val11	Mature Love	0.12	0.30